



A D D R E S S

OF THE

MERCHANTS OF THE CITY OF NORFOLK, VA.

TO

BRIGADIER-GENERAL HENRY M. NAGLEE:

AND

HIS REPLY.

October 1863.

PHILADELPHIA.

1863.



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ADDRESS.

NORFOLK, VA., Oct. 2, 1863.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL HENRY M. NAGLEE.

GENERAL:—

We, citizen-merchants of Norfolk and vicinity, have learned, with feelings of deep regret, that you have been relieved of the command of the District of Virginia, and we feel that we should not be doing justice to ourselves, or to you, were we to omit, upon this occasion, the frank expression of our sentiments towards you.

You have had control of this military district for but two short months. We attest, what candor compels us to say, that during this brief period of time, amid the most trying and complicated occasions, you have given such incontrovertible evidence of a high order of administrative ability, so marked with a courteous bearing toward us and our fellow-citizens, that we should be wanting in those generous feelings which inspire our common humanity were we to withhold upon this occasion this just and public appreciation of your services.

We know but too well, and feel that invidious causes

have been at work in this removal that should never have found a responsive throb in the bosoms of honest men, and that there are those who have sought to displace you simply because, as an honest man, you have proudly and patriotically stood in their way of wholesale robbery and plunder—men whose hearts never pulsed with a feeling beyond that of selfish gain.

When you took charge of this department there was neither order, system, nor rule; your predecessor—marked by indecision of character, and wanting in the higher attributes of manhood—became, in the hands of a few, a vacillating, oscillating pendulum. You commenced the work of reform, which struck at practices inconsistent with good faith, and the restoration of law and order—out of chaos sprang the beauty of system: justice was administered with a firm and even hand to the loyal and disloyal, according to their respective deserts; and many, touched by the logic of unabused power, hastened to join the loyal standard. Indeed, sir, such was the people's faith in the honesty of your purposes, and the wisdom of your acts, that we believe, under your benign rule, the partition wall between union and disunion citizens—comprising a population of over a hundred thousand souls—was fast being broken down, and in their bosoms were being rekindled the still latent fires of patriotic emotion for our generous country.

Your policy was based upon the philosophic theory—taught by the Fathers of the Republic, sustained with the honest purposes of your enthusiastic soul—"that force alone could not restore this Union;" because force is not an element of Union. It was by this policy you essayed, successfully, to inspire the people with unbounded confidence in the fostering care of a constitutional government. You made no war upon helpless women and children and a defenseless people; you pro-

tected the weak and restrained the strong; and in the magnificent charities of a warm heart, you had inaugurated for the government of the people of Norfolk and vicinity the grateful blessings of civil liberty.

We know, General, this wise and eminently humane policy has had its beneficent effect, and that thousands of citizens in this department, hitherto disloyal, were gradually returning to their constitutional allegiance. The change was indeed marked—so marked that we believe if a fair election could be held in Norfolk and surrounding counties—including those in the eastern section of North Carolina bordering on the Virginia line—there would be a large majority for “Union.” But, sir, we confess with feelings of humiliation—because you were doing your work well, too well for those who seek to destroy, and who saw, with envious feelings, the increasing circle of your well-earned fame—you were hastily relieved of the command in this department. We, in common with thousands of others, regret it, deeply regret it—we regret it because discipline and order are the work of experience and time; and we regret it the more because our cause must and will suffer by so sudden a departure.

But, sir, we are overcome with the occasion, and words become feeble instruments of thought, and withal are vain. The fiat has gone forth, and we submit. We have slightly touched upon the causes which prompted this address; we deeply regret the necessity which moves us to action; but we could not resist the temptation to essay to do justice to your noble impulses and wise policy—a policy, permit us, General, with feeling emphasis to say, this district will ever remember with grateful hearts; and when war with his desolating hand shall have ceased to redden with the blood of brothers, and peace with its golden hues shall have returned to bless a

stricken people, around your brow shall gather the ever-green laurel of unsullied fame.

J. G. SHAW,

President of Board of Trade.

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REPLY.

PHILADELPHIA, OCT. 6, 1863.

GENTLEMEN, MERCHANTS OF THE CITY OF NORFOLK:—

Thanks, many thanks, for this second expression of your very kind and friendly regard.

Our relations were confined, as you say, to two short months, but necessity brought us quickly together. The rapid changes that attend the contest that so unfor-

tunately surrounds you, compelled us to think and act and meet all emergencies as promptly as they arose.

My connection with the merchants of Norfolk was most satisfactory. They asked only what was reasonable, and never objected to the rigorous restrictions that were necessarily exacted of them.

Our official connection, as you say, has been abruptly ended; but our social relations, let me hope, have just begun, and I need hardly assure you that, placed wherever I may be, my best efforts will again be directed to serve our unfortunate suffering country in this her hour of dreadful trial.

Let me request that you will hold in your memory the unfortunate people that surround you. Shut not your eyes to the embarrassment and distress and suffering that exist to an alarming extent in many parts of your country, and, understanding these misfortunes, let a liberal, generous, and just rule govern your united and individual relations toward them.

You are non-combatants, you are loyal men of great influence, and it becomes your peculiar duty to stay the mad passions that everywhere prevail; it is your especial province to insist upon those divine injunctions which require that you shall not exact an eye for an eye, but that you shall return good for evil.

My object in coming into this war was to crush the rebellion, and restore the country in all of its strength to the proud position we had just obtained among the nations of the earth; but not, in doing this, to violate any of its fundamental laws. We shall again live together as fellow-citizens and friends; and let us not forget that when that time shall come, each people will again control their own district, and dictate by their free choice who shall be their legislators, judges, and juries.

Gentlemen, in the excitement and changes and alarms

of war, let us not forget the foundation upon which we stand; remember that we are bound together by the sacred compact of the Constitution. Without it we are lost; with it, and the whole of it, we have a bond and union of heart and soul—and a strength that must triumph over all of those that would tear it asunder.

This glorious fabric was not designed by the Almighty for a useless purpose; and, in His mighty wisdom, He will so counsel that He will preserve our country in all of its strength and might and power for the extraordinary uses for which it was destined by Him.

Believe me, gentlemen, there is a destiny which we cannot control, but which has some good and wise purpose. Our people have forgotten the wise and honest principles that were sown by our early ancestors—we have gone from bad to worse, until corruption filled all places, and brought this dreadful punishment upon us.

Let us return to first principles, and, with humble acknowledgments, discard all evil, and establish virtuous and just rules for our future conduct.

Let me thank you again and again for this most flattering testimonial of your kind and friendly feeling, and to assure you it shall ever stimulate me to renewed effort, and shall always be remembered with great pride and satisfaction.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

HENRY M. NAGLEE,

Brigadier-General.

J. G. SHAW, ESQ.,

President of the Board of Trade, Norfolk, Va.,

E. W. WHIPPLE, F. GOTTSBERGER,

And others.

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